

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 34 have been examined. Claims 1 – 6, 28, 29, 33, and 34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,657,952 (“Shiragaki”); Claims 13 – 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Shiragaki in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,473,397 (“Au”); Claims 16 – 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,701,087 (“Beine”) in view of Shiragaki; and Claims 7 – 12, 22 – 27, and 30 – 32 have been identified as allowable except for their dependence from a rejected base claim.

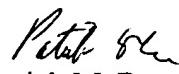
The claims have been amended to incorporate a variant of the limitation of original Claim 9 into each of the independent claims. This limitation includes reference to m subsets, which Applicants note may include unity and nonunity values. Limitations for the more restrictive cases of $m = 1$, $m = 2$, and $m > 2$ are recited specifically in certain dependent claims (*see* Application, p. 9, ll. 6 – 27). Additional amendments to the dependent claims and cancellation of certain dependent claims have been made for consistency with the amendments to the independent claims. Since Claim 9 has been identified as allowable except for its dependence from a rejected base claim, it is believed that all the claims are now patentable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 303-571-4000.

Respectfully submitted,


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